

# The difference between musical and opera

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What is the difference between Musical and Opera? In making an investigation on the difference between Musical and Opera, the most stimulating outcome is that it makes a significant contribution to the popular culture's knowledge of the genre called classical opera. In the modern popular culture, the terms Musical and Opera are often interchangeably used to denote any art form intermixing dramatic works and musical score. For example, Kaspar Hauser, a Musical performed at The Flea recently, was called "A Foundling's Opera", clearly indicating the need for a thorough awareness of the difference between Musical and Opera. As Gabe M. Wiener distinguishes, "Generally, a musical has dialogue with interspersed songs. Opera is generally sung through, the dialogue portions being replaced with recitatives (music which is intoned in a way that resembles speech)."

(Wiener) Some of the most celebrated Musicals are Les Miserables, Chess, Joseph, etc. and these are also known as 'popular operas' or 'rock operas', considering the fact that they have significant similarity to 'classical' opera. Although these Musicals are sung through, it is not the normal case with other Musicals. It is also notable that the principal singers in musicals also perform dance, whereas it is not the practice in opera. (Wiener) Therefore, there are marked differences between Musical and Opera, although one may notice several similar elements in both these art forms. A reflective investigation of the difference between Musical and Opera confirms that the most fundamental difference is that of the emphasis on human voice (or music) and the dramatic work. One of the essential aspects of the question is the role of singing in both the art forms, and it may be noted that an opera is mainly about singing, whereas a musical incorporates speaking parts along

with singing. Originated in Italy at the end of the 16th century, Opera soon became greatly popular in the tradition of Western classical music. In an Opera, singers and musicians combine text with musical scores to perform a dramatic piece. In other words, singing, dramatic dialog, dancing, and acting are essential components of Opera and the musical score is the underlying feature of this performance. On the contrary, Musicals have a longer tradition and it has its roots in the musical theaters of the Greek theater tradition in the 5th century BCE. The most integral components of a Musical are music, songs, spoken dialogue and dance, and it differs from Opera in terms of the subject matter and the diffusion of actual music. According to Maria Zouves, “ the difference is that in opera, the same elements are present as in musical theater, but the emphasis is on the human voice as an incredible musical instrument that transcends the production values of a performance. Through opera, the strength, versatility, and beauty of the human voice is displayed in a manner that defies comparison with any other entertainment form.” (Zouves, 156) Therefore, Musical and Opera are two different art forms which have disparate components and distinct focuses, although they appear to be similar in various ways. Whereas opera and musical are different forms of theatrical performance combining dramatic elements and musical scores, both these art forms greatly differ from each other in their subject matter and the use of music in the performance. In short, Musical and Opera should be comprehended as distinct art forms which defy comparison with regard to the basic components such as music, songs, spoken dialogue, acting and dance. Works Cited Wiener, Gabe M. “ 10. What is the difference between an opera and a musical?” Stason. org.

Feb 23, 2011. . Zouves, Maria. “ Why Opera? The Incredible Human Voice.”  
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